





Reminiscences  
Of Ten Years Experience  
On the  
Western Plains

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HOW THE UNITED STATES  
MAILS WERE CARRIED BE-  
FORE RAILROADS REACHED  
THE SANTA FE TRAIL

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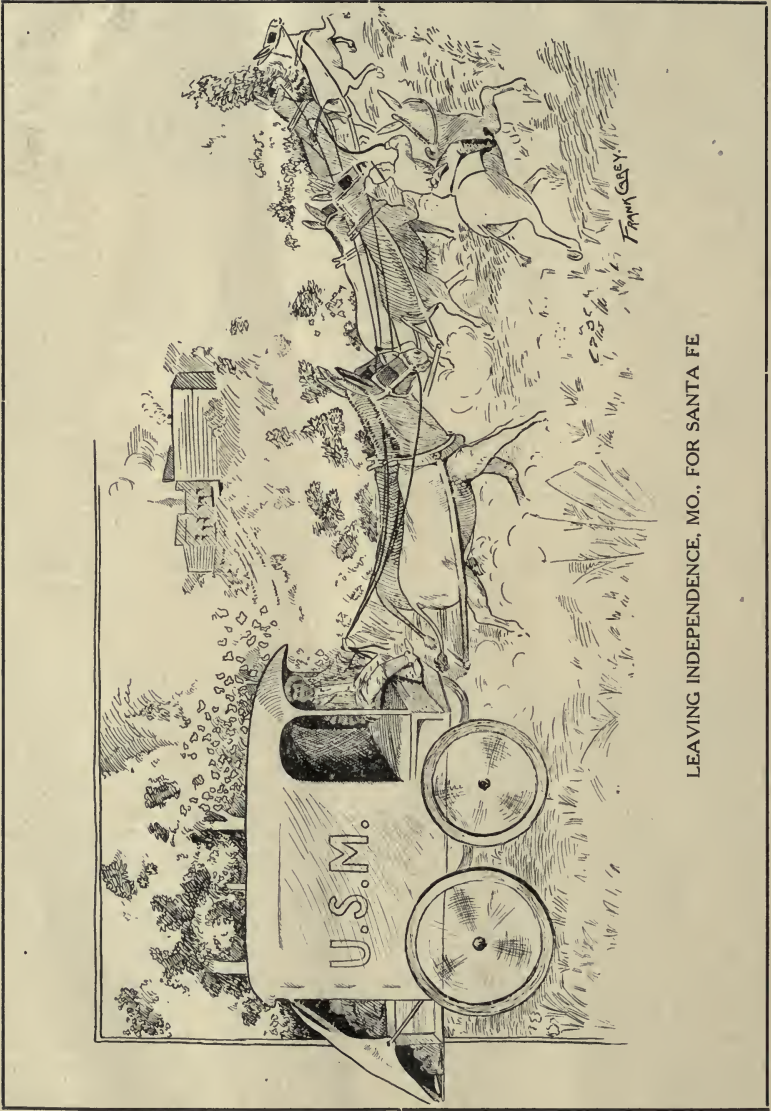
BY JAMES BRICE,  
Kansas City, Mo.

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THE JOANNE KATHERINE MILLER FUND

In 1858 I was employed by Messrs. Hall & Porter, overland mail contractors, as helper, carrying the United States weekly mail from Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, 775 miles, on a schedule of twenty-one days, signing Articles of Agreement to serve one year or forfeit ten dollars per month of my salary, if I did not carry out my contract. Starting from Col. Hall's residence Monday morning, with six mules hitched to an ambulance marked on each side in large letters, "U. S. M.," Conductor Michael Smith riding a saddle mule alongside the team with a blacksnake whip in hand, two pistols hanging from a belt around his body. I held the lines, sitting on the seat of the vehicle, driving direct to the Post Office, receiving a through and way mail sack, calling at the Company's office for passengers and express. Stage fare for passenger and forty pounds of baggage to Santa Fe, one hundred and twenty-five dollars; way fare, twenty-five cents per mile. It took two days to reach Council Grove, Kansas—one hundred miles, supplying mail to all Post Offices on the route. Starting from Independence, going by way of Pitchers Mill, crossing the Blue River. Roads were so bad that the team could make but little headway. It was night when we reached Mr. McCoy's farm, where the team got mired and lay down in the middle of the road, and would not get up until we unharnessed them. Conductor Smith went to see Mr. McCoy, who immediately sent a man and a yoke of cattle to haul the mail wagon to a house one-quarter of a mile from where we were stalled, and where we stopped all night, getting supper, breakfast and feed for the mules. Starting early next morning after the harness that was lying in the mud, leading the mules, bringing a pick and hatchet to clean off the frozen mud before we could get them on the animals. Calling at Westport Post Office for exchange of mails, continuing our route, Olathe, Kansas, Gardner, Baldwin City, 110-Mile Creek, Burlingame, Big John Springs, Council Grove, where we exchanged the ambulance for a heavy two-horse covered wagon with a boot attached, to carry our provisions and cooking utensils, also an assistant helper for the long route to Fort Union, New Mexico—loading the wagon bed with corn in two-bushel sacks, sufficient rations for the mules until we reached Fort Union, 575 miles. It took seventeen days to make the distance, sleeping on the ground in all kinds of weather—passengers took kindly to the situation, using the corn sacks for a mattress to sleep on. Fastening all the rails of wood we could to the axles of the wagon to cook our meals, if buffalo chips could not be used. Six large mules hitched to the heavy wagon, two extras and a Bell pony fastened to the off-side of the team. One man rode a saddle mule alongside the team to keep its movements as the Conductor directed. We had a lariat and picket pin for each animal, securing them at night from returning to the quarters they had left. Going by way of Diamond Springs, Lost Springs, Cottonwood Creek, Turkey Creek, Little Arkansas, Cow Creek, Arkansas River, Walnut Creek, Pawnee Rocks, Ash Creek, Pawnee Fork, Coon Creek and Caches Foot of the dry route, Comarone Crossing of the Arkansas River, from the latter point it was three hundred miles to Fort Union, without a Post Office or hab'tation through a savage territory, infested with Kiowa and Comanche Indians. Forging the river and continuing the route by way of the Battle Ground Bone Yard, Sand Creek, Lower Cimarone Springs, Middle Cimarone Springs, Willow Bar, Upper Cimarone Springs, Cold Springs, McNeses Creek, Cedar Creek, Whitslone Creek, Rabbit Ear



LEAVING INDEPENDENCE, MO., FOR SANTA FE

Creek, Round Mound, Rock Creek, Point of Rocks, Rio Colorado, Ocate, Santa Clara Springs, Apache Canon, Bourgon Valley, Fort Union. We made three drives a day and always stopping at noon to water the mules and let them browse around for half an hour. When creeks were frozen we would have to cut the ice before we could get the mules to cross; one man always rode alongside the team to see that each animal did his portion of the work. It would be far advanced in the night sometimes when our day's journey was completed. We cooked twice a day, using an oilcloth spread on the ground for a table cloth, starting early every morning to get water for breakfast. In summer we could see buffalo as far as our eyes could reach; when they were quiet and lying down, it was our sign that there were no Indians in the vicinity. There was a great rush of travel in the fall of 1858 on account of reports of rich gold discoveries in Pikes Peak. The gold seekers traveled the Santa Fe Trail until they reached the fork of the road to bring them to the promised land, which junction is about fifteen miles west of where Dodge City is now located.

I have seen gangs of women pushing go carts accompanied by men. I often met a lone man with all his belongings tied up in a handkerchief, hanging on the rifle he was carrying on his shoulder. Camped at noon, greasing the mail wagon at The Dead Man's Hollow, about 150 miles east of Fort Union. We were surprised by a band of Kiowa Indians, threatening our lives, if we did not give them all our provisions. They were very saucy, 150 strong and only three in our party. We concluded they were bad Indians and were as compliable as circumstances would permit. Traveling all night to get as far from them as we possibly could. About two o'clock in the morning we heard a call, believing it to be the Indians following us, we prepared to defend ourselves the best way we could. Overtaken by an indian wanting to know if we saw any Indians; we told him where we met the band he was inquiring for. Turning his pony and going in the direction we told him. We kept on traveling as long as our animals were able to stand it, to get as far as possible from those blood thirsty demons.

In winter the prairie would be burned for hundreds of miles and looked as black as if an artist had used his brush. When snow covered the ground, prairie and trail looked alike; we would point our wagon tongue in the direction we were going to guide us on the right trail. Reaching Fort Union, we exchanged our heavy wagon for an ambulance similar to the one we started with from Independence, leaving one man to have everything ready when we returned from Santa Fe with the Eastern mail; continuing the route by way of Las Vegas Toclota, San Jose, Pecos River, Rick Correll, Santa Fe. Citizens would gather on the plaza to welcome the Eastern mail, almost a month old, from New York and furnish us with tickets to a fandango.

The principal merchants in Santa Fe in those days were Messrs. Elburg and Amburg, Messrs. Beck and Johnson, and Mr. Spickelburg. The Refunda is the only hotel I recollect. After a week's rest we would start back for Independence with the Eastern mail. Covering the points and Post Offices already mentioned, to Fort Union; everything being ready to continue our trip, we hitched to our heavy covered wagon with the same number of mules and equipment we had leaving Council Grove. There was no Post Office until we reached Cow Creek, Kansas. Four hundred and twenty-five miles freighters, emigrants and all travelers

between those points used the weekly mail wagon as a distributing office. Receiving and delivering letters addressed to persons on the trail, mailing all letters received at the first Post Office we reached. From April to late in the fall we would be in sight of a wagon train loaded with supplies going West, or coming East loaded with wool and other products of the West. Reaching Council Grove, we exchanged the heavy wagon for the ambulance we had brought from Independence, when we started on our Western trip, leaving one man to have everything in readiness to start when we returned from Independence with the mail for Santa Fe; calling at all Post Offices for exchange of mails; arriving at our destination forty-eight days from the time we left, making schedule time from Independence to Santa Fe and return.

In 1859 the Kiowa Indians went on the war path. Bill Allison, of Independence, Missouri, owned a ranch at Walnut Creek and kept a store, where freighters and emigrants could purchase whatever they required. He started early in the spring with his mule train to bring back the goods he ordered to replenish his store, but died suddenly at Wayne City after loading his train; Mr. Peacock, of Independence, Missouri, became manager of the ranch, but the Indians did not seem to like the new manager and showed a disposition to be quarrelsome, shooting a goat belonging to the ranch. About this time troops passed en route for Fort Riley, Major Sedgwick in command; Mr. Peacock called on him for protection. He sent Lieut. George D. Baird with his Company back to the ranch to find out the cause of the trouble. While talking over the matter with Pawnee, a sub-chief of the Kiowa tribe, one of the soldiers holding the lariat fastened around his pony's neck, he pulled his butcher knife from the scabbard, cutting the lasso and jumping on his pony, forcing him to run as fast as he could go. The Lieutenant mounted his horse following and shooting over him several times to let him know the result if he would not halt, but he kept running as fast as his pony could go; seeing he would not halt, the officer shot and the Indian fell dead from his pony. The Lieutenant then informed the band of Indians he belonged to, telling them the reason for shooting the Indian. The weekly mail from Independence in charge of Michael Smith, his brother and Bill Cole, helpers, met the troops at Cow Creek. Major Sedgwick detailed forty men to escort the mail over what was considered the dangerous ground from Cow Creek to Pawnee Fork, 55 miles, making the distance without seeing Indians. After the mail party took supper, they started to make the usual night drive; they were overtaken by Indians in their usual greeting, "How How." Conductor Smith told Bill Cole to give them some crackers—we always carried a barrel of them in the hind boot of our wagon, the kind of bread we used on the plains in those days. While Cole was giving them the crackers, they commenced shooting arrows into the conductor's body, killing his brother, who was holding the lines, with a rifle, falling back a corpse in the wagon. Cole jumped into the wagon, picked up a rifle and fired at random, as he told me afterwards, causing the team to swing off the road alongside a deep ravine, getting out in front of the wagon, crawling along the ravine in the dark where he could see the light of the soldiers camp fire that he left only half an hour before. Making his way in the darkness, the escort telling them the fate of his comrades. The Indians did not scalp the Smith brothers, but took the boots off their feet, and taking nine mules, harness and Bell pony, cutting open the



mail sacks, and scattering the contents on the prairie. Soldiers buried the bodies, gathered up all the mail they could find and gave it to the first mail party they met. Michael Smith was the first conductor I crossed the plains with, and I was booked for one of his helpers the trip he got killed. I was sick and Dr. Henry advised me not to undertake the trip. Next weekly mail after the murder of the Smith Brothers, Peter Kelly was conductor; I was one of his helpers. Reaching the big bend of the Arkansas River we met Lieutenant Long, a cavalry officer, and forty men, detailed by Major Sedgwick to escort the mail to the Cimarrone Crossing of the Arkansas River, 110 miles further west. Before we reached the point where the escort would leave us and return to join their command, we found three dead bodies, two men and one woman, scalped and stripped of all their clothing; they seemed to be emigrants murdered where they were camped, wagon and yokes were there, but no cattle in sight. Feathers flying all over the prairie, bed ticks carried off. The body of one of the men and the woman were close together; a little white dog sitting barking between them; a half burned stick of wood lying on the man's breast showed it was on fire when placed there, as the flesh was burned brown. The supposition at the time was the little dog kept the wolves away from the bodies he seemed to be watching over, as the third corpse lay fifty yards from the other, one of his limbs torn from the body by those animals. The Lieutenant took the sheets from his bed and had them wrapped around the dead bodies. We could see Indians in the sand hills, south of the river watching us while we were burying them. The Lieutenant wrote a card, addressed "To All Travelers," telling them to keep close together; that he buried two men and a woman, murdered by Indians, sending some of his men to a junction of roads where emigrants and gold seekers left the Santa Fe Trail for Pikes Peak, with instructions to place it where all travelers could see it, signed "Lieut. Ellie Long, U. S. Cavalry." We returned with the troops. One of the troopers took the little dog along in front of him on the saddle, but the little fellow broke away from his captor the first camp we came to, and could not be captured, he ran back twenty miles. We found him dead under the bank of the river, six weeks afterwards, fifty yards from his master's grave. We remained with the military escort until we met an ox train loaded with supplies for Fort Union, returning and remaining with the ox train until we got out of danger. Then, leaving the trail, we made what lost time we could and delivered the mail at Santa Fe. On our return trip, coming East, we traveled from Fort Union with Captain McComb, who had a company of U. S. Infantry, for the purpose of making the boundary line between Colorado and Kansas. Our fifth day with the military escort, two ox wagons belonging to Major Russell came along, in charge of Dick Berry, bringing teamsters back to Missouri, that worked for the Company all summer. Believing that we could deliver the mail at Independence eight days sooner, by traveling with the ox wagons, we left the military



BURYING THE EMIGRANT FAMILY

Frank Galey

escort and went with them. Traveling all day without seeing Indians, we thought we were out of their range, but our hopes were of short duration. Making the usual night drive, they attacked us, firing several volleys at us, but did not hurt anybody. Arranging the wagons the best way we could, tying a rope around the horns of the leaders of the ox wagons and fastening a lariat about the necks of the mules. Men walking between the wagons with all the fire arms and ammunition we could muster. Two men holding the lariats ready when attacked to bring the animals into our moving fort and strengthen our lines. Mr. Berry threw out of his wagon several sacks of bacon and flour to lighten them and make it easier on his teams. He also turned out a yoke of cattle that was not able to travel with the others. After traveling four or five miles and Indians not making a second attack, the mail conductor and wagon master started on mule back to reach Capt. McComb, before he would leave camp in the morning. Following the wagon tracks of his escort, they found him six or seven miles off the regular mail route. Informing him that we were attacked by Indians. He called on his command for volunteers, who responded readily, mounting wagon mules, using gunny sacks or anything that would serve for a saddle. Our animals, traveling day and night, were about given out, and no signs of conductor or wagon masters' return. We concluded to rest them and camped at a point we called "The Red Holes." The ground, being elevated, gave us an unobstructed view of valley to the west. We were camped but a short time, when we saw objects that we thought were Indians, but they were so far off that we could not tell what they were, and decided to secure our stock, getting them between the wagons and tying our mules with their lariats. The closer we got to the supposed Indians, the more glad we were to see it was the troops, with conductor and wagon master, to bring us to Capt. McComb's camp. Mr. Kelly's pistol dropped out of its scabbard when he and Berry started in the night to find Capt. McComb, and he concluded to try and find it, Mr. Berry going along with him over the road they traveled in the night. He found the pistol, returning to overtake us before we would reach camp, they were surprised to see a large force of those savages following us. Whipping and spurring their mules reaching camp only by the skin of their teeth, as they were pursued to within a rifle's shot of Capt. McComb's camp. I believe they would have overtaken us sooner only they were looking for a secure hiding place to deposit the bacon and flour that Mr. Berry had thrown out of his wagon, from the wolf and coyotes so numerous on the plains in those days. We remained with Capt. McComb until he completed the boundary line. I went from camp with the troops that were going to finish the work; I was looking at them when they put a round bar of iron in the center of a mound, built of rock, to establish the line. I believe I could go to the latter point today, if it were necessary. After finishing the work, the Captain headed for Missouri; we remained with him until we got to the settlement, the oxen traveling right along with the mules. Thanking him for his kindness and protection, we started to gain as much lost time as we could to deliver the mail at Independence.

November, 1859, Col. Hall, one of the mail contractors, instructed me to take all the public documents at Council Grove and Pawnee Fork and deliver them at Santa Fe. If the commanding officer at Fort Larned would not furnish an escort, deposit the mail at the Post Office,



PROTECTING THEMSELVES AND THE MAIL FROM THE INDIANS

get a receipt for it and return to Independence. When I applied to Capt. David Bell, the commander, informing him of the instructions given me by the mail company, he told me he could not furnish an escort; that I would meet one at the Cimarrone Crossing of the Arkansas River; they would return with me to Fort Union. I asked him for a letter to the officer in command, but he declined, saying it was not necessary. My outfit consisted of eight assistant, three loaded wagons, six mules, hitched to each wagon, and six or seven extras for emergencies. I had seventy-five miles to travel before I could find out if my doubts were well founded about the escort returning with me to Fort Union. I met the troops camped at the point Captain Bell told me. Informing the officer in command that Captain Bell told me he would return with me to Fort Union, the gentleman informed me that his rations were almost exhausted, his horses bare-footed and he could not return with me. It was three hundred miles to Fort Union, without a Post Office or habitation, through a savage territory, regular range for Kiowa and Comanche Indians, then at war with the government. I concluded it was too dangerous with the small force I had, to proceed further. Traveling back to the junction of roads, to go by way of Ratone, fifty miles further than the regular mail route, and believing I could deliver the mail at Santa Fe on schedule time. We started on the new route, although none of us were ever over the road before. Going by way of Pleasant Encampment, Sand Creek, Bent's New Fort, fording the Arkansas River at Bents Old Fort, thirty-five miles further west, continuing the route by Iron Springs, fording Picket Wire at Trinidad, over the Ratone Mountains, Maxwell's Ranch, Reoyal Calhoun's Ranch, reaching the Santa Fe trail regular mail route six miles north of Fort Union. Stealing a march on the hostile Kiowas, meeting only a small band of friendly Cheyennes. They seemed well pleased when I gave them a little sugar and coffee. Arriving at Fort Union on time, leaving all my helpers but two to have everything ready when I returned from Santa Fe with the Eastern mail. Reaching my destination on schedule time, with the first mail to cross the Ratone Mountains, fifteen months before the service was changed from the Santa Fe Trail to supply Fort Wise, which was reported February 22d, 1861. On my return trip with the Eastern mail, I traveled with an escort in charge of Sergeant Speed, who was bringing the remains of Col. May, an army officer who died at Fort Union, to be forwarded to Baltimore, Maryland, for interment. He did not have a full company; asked me to have my men stand guard: I told him they would, and that I would stand guard myself when called on. I was sitting by the camp fire our first night out from Fort Union, when the Sergeant accosted one of his own teamsters, Jones, "I heard that you said you would not stand guard, it may be if you don't I will make a spread eagle out of you." We had a deep snow all the way from Fort Union to Missouri, but no spread eagles. I remained with the military escort until I came to the stations where the company kept relays of fresh animals. Bidding good-bye to Sergeant Speed and thanking him for his protection and courtesy, I started for my destination, visiting all Post Offices on the route, arriving at Independence on schedule time, to Santa Fe and return.

WHITTIER STATE SCHOOL,  
WHITTIER, CAL.

J. P. Greenly, Superintendent,

H. N. Coffin, M. D.

Whittier, Cal., Sept. 22, 1905.

James Brice, Esq.,

Kansas City, Mo.

My Dear Old Comrade: Your letter of the 16th received, and I am glad to hear from you. My nephew, E. J. Peck, of Larphop, Mo., had written to me that he came across you in Kansas City and had a talk with you. You do not seem to remember me, but it is not strange that you would fail to remember all the soldiers you met on the plains, wher you came in contact with so many different ones; while I would naturally recollect nearly all of the old mail hands, for there were not so many of them. You are mistaken about the year when Lieut. Long's party buried that emigrant family; it was in September or October, '59, instead of '58. The Kiowa outbreak began with the killing of old Pawnee, one of their chiefs, by Lieut. George D. Baird, in the latter part of September, '59. I was right alongside of Baird when he shot the Indian, about a mile north of Peacock's Ranch. Our commander, Maj. Sedwick, had started into Fort Riley after being out along the Arkansas River all summer; after Pawnee was killed, we went on into Riley, but the Kiowas had gone on the war path and the company I belonged to (K) Capt. Geo. H. Stewart's, was sent back to Pawnee Fork, where we built sod houses to live in and escort mails all that winter. Before going into Fort Riley, just after Baird killed old Pawnee, on the same afternoon, while we were camped near Peacock's Ranch, a mail wagon from Independence came along; the conductor was named Smith, his brother was one of the drivers and Bill Cole was the other. Maj. Sedwick detailed Lieut. Otis and ten men from each of the four companies, making forty men to escort the mail through what was considered the dangerous ground, from Walnut Creek to Pawnee Fork. I was one of that escort; you know how that resulted in the murder of the two Smiths and narrow escape of Bill Cole. I was with you on two or three trips I think that winter, but remember none more particularly than one trip in mid-winter, that we took you clear through to Fort Union, it was terribly cold weather the whole trip through and back. Coming back we had two or three feet of snow all the way. Going out we were attacked by the Indians one night while camped on a little branch of Red River. You will certainly remember that night. Corporal Newman had charge of the party of twenty soldiers and I was Lance Corporal. You ought to remember one of my chums, Bill Crowley, for he was always teasing and joshing you on that trip. Bill is still living and I get letters from him occasionally. The drivers you had that trip were Pat Murray and John Steel. Among the old hands on the road at that time, I remember Dave McKinstry, Frank Cole (a brother of Bill's), Henry Lovell, Bob Carson and others. After the killing of the Smiths, our command being under order for Fort Riley, went on in, but Maj. Sedgwick left Lieut. Long and forty men at the Big Bend to escort the mail until he got orders at Riley to send "K" company back

to the Arkansas to winter. It was while on this duty that Long's party found and buried the murdered family you speak of, my chum Bill Crowley was one of that party, but I was not; I had gone to Fort Riley. When we came back to Pawnee Fork to establish our winter quarters, it was about the 1st of November. The mail contractors (Hall & Porter) sent out some men and an outfit to build a station at Pawnee Fork; a man named Butts had charge of the job, but as soon as the mail station was established, Butts went back to Independence and one Stark came out to take charge of the mail station. Stark got into trouble by selling whiskey to the soldiers and he was recalled by Hall & Porter, and then Butts came on again and remained in charge of the station until we left there in the spring of '60, to go on the Kiowa expedition. Our commanding officer was Lieut. David Bell. During that winter Bell and Butts built a bridge over Pawnee Fork, but I don't think they ever got their money out of it. Bell died that summer, while on sick furlough, at old Point Comfort, Virginia. In the fall of '60, after the Kiowa expedition, we, Sedwicks command, were ordered up to Bents Fort to build Fort Wise, afterwards called Fort Lyon, where I put in the balance of five years and never got to go back to Fort Larned but once, that was in the latter part of the winter, about February, '61, when there was a big snow on. Larned was then garrisoned by two companies of second infantry with Capt. Julius Hayden in command. Weilselbum was settled in 1901. I wrote up and published in the National Tribune of Washington, D. C., the narrative of my five years in the army, detailing all about that winter escorting the mails. My story was published under the title, "Rough Riding on the Plains." I expect you would be interested in that part of it, at least you might write to the National Tribune and ask if they can furnish you the back number containing my story. I will be glad to hear from you again; with best wishes for your health and prosperity, I remain your o'd comrade,

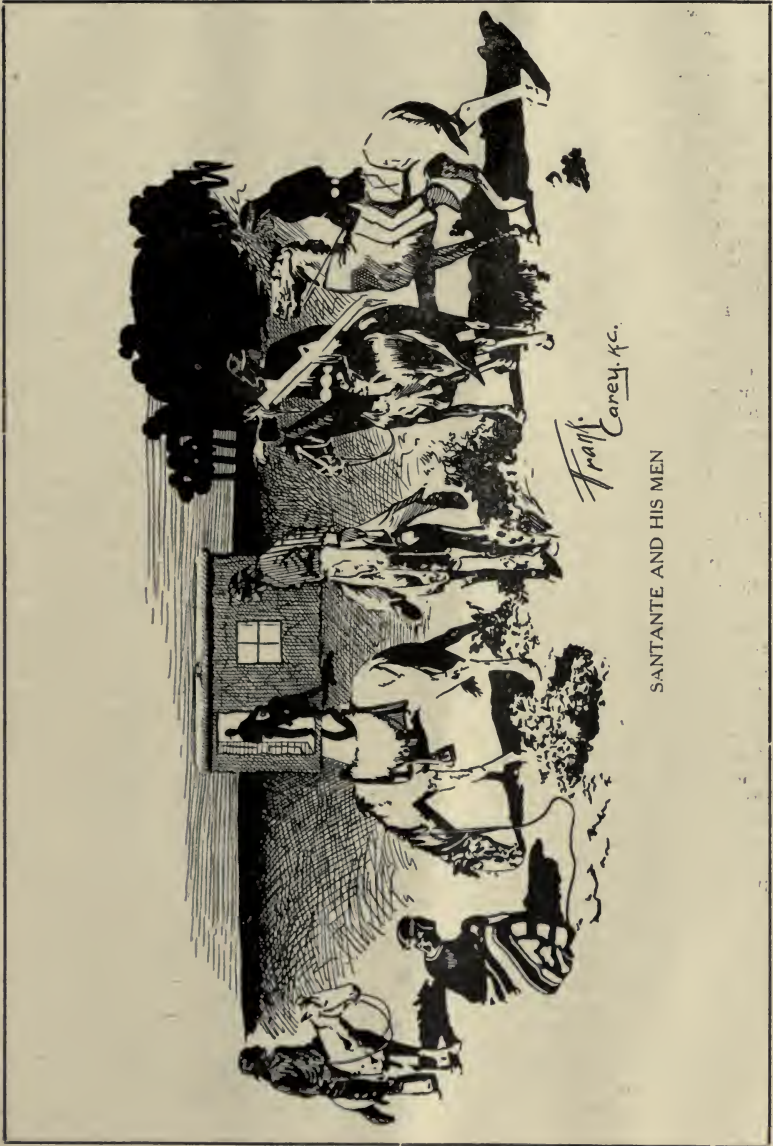
ROBERT MORRIS PECK.

Lock box 50, Whittier, Cal.

In 1860 Messrs. Hall & Porter sold their unexpired term of the Santa Fe mail contract to the Missouri Stage Company, known afterwards as Slemmons, Roberts & Co. The late Mr. Preston Roberts, of Independence, Missouri, was manager and employed me to take charge of their supply station at Pawnee Fork, where they kept a large number of mules and other necessities for their employes, instructing me to give no stage passes or be dictated to by anybody. The new manager made a good many changes on the line, doing away with the heavy covered lumber wagons, replacing them with thorough brace Concord Hacks. Establishing new stations to keep relays of animals to expedite the delivery of the service. I was only a few days in my new position, when the commanding officer at Fort Larned brought a woman to the mail station, whom a wagon master got from Comanche Indians, on the Santa Fe Trail for some flour; requesting me to send her to Kansas City. I told him I would send her by the first mail going East. My wife took charge of her. He sent the Post physician to see her; she begged that gentleman, for God's sake not to talk to her! The doctor told me she was out of her mind and I agreed with him. My wife did everything she could to induce her to go to bed, thinking she might

sleep and we would learn more of her history and how she got into the hands of the Indians, but all her pleadings and efforts could not induce her to retire. She sat by the stove all night. I secreted myself and watched her, for fear she would run off or do herself bodily harm. The Eastern mail arrived on time and I gave her in charge to the conductor; I never heard anything more about her or where she belonged. Fort Larned was then garrisoned by two companies, second U. S. Infantry, Capt. Julius Hayden in command, a strict disciplinarian. He kept a sentinel from his headquarters to the mail station, advising me if Indians wanted to see him, to bring them to his office. A few days after the captain had been talking with me, I brought an Indian through the lines, who wanted to see the commander. When we reached the captain's office, he called for his interpreter to ask the Indian what he wanted. The Indian replied, "My father sent me to know why you want us to move camp for?" "Tell him the military reservation is ten miles square and we want the grass close to the Post for our wnhorses, mules and beef cattle." The interpreter told the Indian, who replied that he would tell the old man when he would reach home (meaning his father). The reply did not suit the captain. "Tell him I am chief of these guns," pointing to several cannon on the parade ground. The Indian replied, "I see his guns, they make a big noise, but don't do much harm." "Tell him if he don't move before the sun goes down, I will move him." The Indians moved immediately when they heard what the commander said. Pawnee Fork was the regular camping ground for Kiowas, Cheyennes and Arapahoes before Fort Larned was established, and they wanted to continue their former practice; they would come to the mail Station at all hours. Santanta, a Kiowa leader of young desperadoes on the frontier days as dog soldiers, and more feared than loved by his pale faced brethren, came along about midnight with eighteen or twenty of his band. He would knock on the door; I would get up out of bed, not knowing who was knocking; opening the door to see, I was facing those Indians mounted in single file like cavalry soldiers waiting orders from commander, wanting to stop with me and get a pass on the stage to Council Grove, 200 miles, where he and his men were going to see the Comanche Indians. I would tell him that the commanding officer gave me orders to inform him when Indians came to the mail station, and that he would have to go and see him. After telling my wife to bolt the doors, we would start for headquarters. Santanta was a large man and would crouch behind me for protection from stray bullets if any should come our way. he preferred them to reach me first. When we reached the sentinel, he asked: 'Who comes there?' and I answered, Brice, from the mail station, with Santanta to see the commanding officer. Halt! he would call the sergeant of the guard; after all the preliminaries, we would be told to advance. The sergeant would wake up the commander from his bed, telling him Santanta with eighteen or twenty of his band wanted to stop all night; he would direct the sergeant to let the men sleep in the guard house and turn their ponies into the corral. Santanta would decline the invitation and return with me. While we were seeing the captain the Indians waiting our return, tied their ponies in a ravine close to the mail station. Sitting around a camp fire, I would bring them bread and all the cooked victuals I could find, remaining with them until their camp fires went out and that there was no danger of burning the mail companies hay stacks.





SANTANTE AND HIS MEN

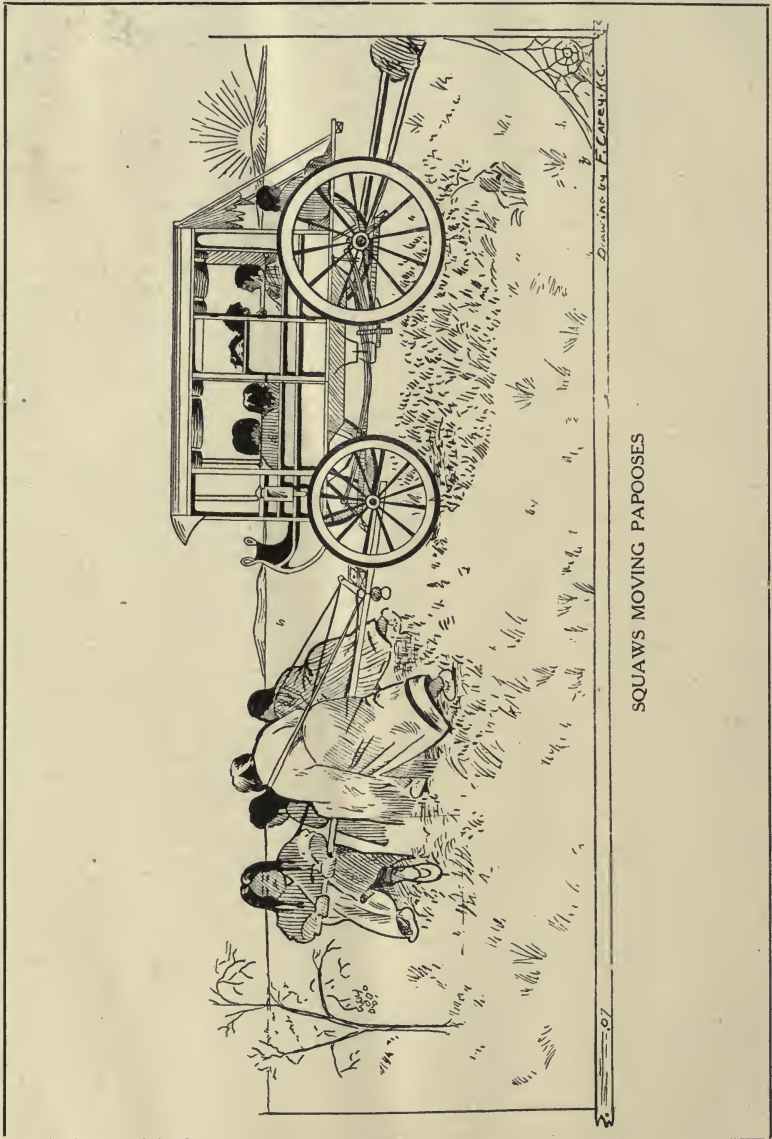
They would tell me how badly they were treated by the white people killing their buffaloes and taking their hunting grounds; I would tell them that the Big Chief made all the laws and everybody had to comply with them. I would pass Santanta in the stage to Council Grove and put his name on the way bill with initials of my name opposite. He carried a bugle when he got on the seat beside the driver, he would make as good a call as any post musician, his men would come on a double quick, taking their places each side of the mail coach like a military escort. The herder brought one of the mules in off the pasture that was bitten by a rattlesnake. His head was twice its natural size. I brought a Cheyenne Indian to see the animal, who had me to throw him down and secure him from struggling. He took my pen knife, sharpened the point of the small blade, tied a cord around it, leaving one-fourth inch uncovered, pricking the mule around the nostrils with the uncovered point, blood coming from each stab; rubbing the bloody part with gunpowder and telling me to keep him from water until the next morning. I complied with his instructions and the mule was all right next morning. I had a brood of chickens about a week old. He asked me to give him a pair. I could not see what he wanted with them, as those blanket Indians were always on the move. Striking his limbs with both hands, imitating a rooster flapping his wings to crow, telling me in Spanish he wanted to know when it was near daylight. I told him it would be four weeks before they could be taken from their mother. He came one time I was absent and my wife gave him the chickens. I met him about sundown eight miles from the mail station. He had one on each side of the saddle, pointing out to me the rooster from the pullet.

February, 1861, the Santa Fe mail service was changed from the Cimarrone route by way of Ratone to supply Fort Lyon. The mail company ran two stages from Pawnee Fork to Fort Lyon, 250 miles. It took five days to make the trip each way. There were no stations between those points. Passengers were provided with the same accommodations they had on the Cimarrone route Messrs. Slemmons, Roberts & Company's contract expired in nine months after they commenced the service, and at the regular mail letting the contract was awarded to Messrs. Cottrell, Vickroy & Company. The late Mr. H. M. Vail, of Independence, Missouri, was one of the company, but they did not keep the contract long until they sold out to Messrs. Bollow & Sanderson, gentlemen of large means. Mr. Bollow lived at St. Albans, Vermont. Mr. Sanderson lived at Kansas City, Missouri; was manager and an expert running a stage line, equipping the new enterprise with new thorough Brace Concord coaches and the best animals money could purchase, expediting the service from tri-weekly to daily and holding the line against a competition until it became railroad service.

In the winter of 1863 the Eastern mail got snow-bound about eight miles west of where Dodge City is now located. One of the mules froze to death, after being unhitched from the wagon. One of the drivers started on mule back to inform me of the situation. He got only four or five miles until his mule gave out, lying down in the road, and he had to leave him. Seeing the light of a camp fire, he crossed the Arkansas river on the ice, reaching an Indian camp with hands and feet frozen. The Indians had to cut his boots before they could get them off, wrapping his feet with a buffalo robe, but could not remove the gloves.

The Indians brought him and the mule to the mail station. There were two army officers, passengers on the stage, sent a letter to the commanding officer at Fort Larned, who sent fuel to assist the men I sent to bring passengers and mail to the post. One of the stages was left where it was snow bound and disappeared before I could send after it. It took several months before I could find out what band of Indians had taken it. I finally located it in Pawnee Creek, sixty miles from Fort Larned. I sent two men with a team to bring it home. They had no trouble in finding it. The squaws arranged harness to suit themselves, made of strips of buffalo robe, using the vehicle to carry their "pap-poooses" over the prairie when they would be moving to their different camps.

When the regulars were relieved at Fort Larned it was garrisoned with volunteers. Col. Leavenworth was commanding officer. Indians took more liberties than they had under the former commander and would prowl around the post at all hours. A good while after taps a horseman riding towards the post was challenged by the sentinel. Getting no reply, he shot at the intruder, alarming the garrison by the discharge of firearms at such an unusual hour. Officers hastening to find out what was the matter found a dead Indian. The sentinel did not know who the horseman might be and was carrying out his instructions. The Indians were notified and came to identify the body and the band he belonged to. The commanding officer gave orders to bury the Indian and put a paling around his grave. The order was carried out. I could see the paling around the grave while I remained at Pawnee Fork. A few months after the Indian was shot by the sentinel, two fine horses, the private property of a commissary sergeant of the Second Colorado troops, broke a way from the man who was watering them and running north crossed the bridge over Pawnee creek a mile from the post. The owner offered a reward to have them caught and brought back. Two mounted soldiers followed them and crossing the bridge were cut off from the post by Indians, who murdered them and mutilated their bodies in such a savage manner that they had to be carried to the post in gunny sacks. The poor fellows lost their lives and were cut to pieces trying to catch the horses and bring them back to their owner, Indians capturing the four horses after committing the brutal deed. General Sacket, U. S. Army, was a passenger on the coach en route for New Mexico a few days after these murders were committed. I was telling him how bold those savages were, murdering people in sight of the commanding officer's headquarters. I told the general I was going to see the commander, to know when the troops would be ready to escort the mail to Fort Lyon, suggesting to him if he seen the gentleman he might give him a larger force than he would give me. He replied: "Get your escort; I can go with any escort." Remarking at the same time that General Custer was the man to get after those Indians. About twelve or thirteen years after these remarks were made by General Sacket, General Custer with 261 men of the Seventh Cavalry were murdered by Indians in the Black Hills region on the Little Horn river, and 52 were wounded. The Indians never forgave Mr. Peacock for calling on General Sedgwick's command that killed Pawnee, one of their band, in 1859, retaining their savage animosity by plotting to murder him and his men. In less than twelve months after the shooting of the Indian by Lieut. Baird, three of those bloodthirsty savages came



SQUAWS MOVING PAPOSES

to the ranch and told the men that troops were coming from Fort Larned. There were none coming; it was a pre-arranged plot to murder Mr. Peacock and his men when they would be looking for the coming troops. Mr. Peacock and two of his men went up on the flat roof of the house to see if there was a large force coming, the Indians going with them. The moment the ranchmen looked for the troops they were shot in the back. One of the men made his way off the roof and fell dead in the room where Simon Ebey, one of the stage drivers, was sick in bed for two weeks. He saw the Indians taking everything they could carry off without moving a muscle until the darkness of the night covered his movements; making his way to Fort Larned, 35 miles, and informing the commanding officer of the murders committed by those blood thirsty demons. The commander immediately sent soldiers to the ranch to bury the dead bodies and protect the property until it was taken charge of by the proper parties. The sick man was taken into the hospital, where he remained until he was able to go to work. The last I heard of him he was living at Bumelo, New Mexico.

July, 1864, Cheyennes, Kiowas, Arapahoes and some Comanche and Hickory Apaches were camped a mile north of Fort Larned, garrisoned with Kansas troops and a section of a Wisconsin battery in charge of Lieut. Croker, and Capt. Reed was commanding officer. The combined Indian tribes went on the warpath, commencing at Fort Larned and running off a large number of horses and the beef cattle belonging to the post. I lost twelve head of young cows, my private property, worth \$300, that was taken with the beef herd. I gave the claim to Major Wynecoop, Indian Agent, to present to the Indian Bureau. When I made inquiry at the Indian office I was informed that there was no record of it and I never got anything for my cows. Two weeks before the Indians commenced their depredations I was afraid of their treachery and warned the man that I had herding the company's mules, when I signaled to him to run the mules to the corral as fast as he possibly could. He was on the lookout and complied with my instructions. When I got the mules secured I applied to the commanding officer for arms and ammunition for all the men I had at the mail station. He gave me all I asked for and invited me to bring my family to the post, where they would be out of danger. I thanked him for his kind invitation and told him I had a sufficient force when they were armed to protect ourselves and the property in my charge belonging to the mail company. When I got the guns and ammunition I started on a double-quick with the men I brought with me to carry them. When we came within a hundred yards of the mail station we saw two Indians running the two soldiers that were herding the beef cattle. until they came to our corral twenty yards from our dwelling house. Seeing that we were prepared to resist their further approach, they gave up the chase and returned to their villages, acting as sentinels and riding back and forward in front of them until all the tepees were taken down, then they went along with the Indians and tepees, fleeing from danger as fast as they could. It looked as if the Indians had prearranged for a general attack along the line of the Santa Fe Trail for 150 miles at all the points at the same time. While they were depredating at Fort Larned, a train loaded with flour for the government was captured about the same time between Great Bend and Allison's Ranch, on Walnut creek, known then as Fort Zara and garrisoned with troops, killing all the

teamsters and taking off and carrying away the wagon covers and cattle belonging to the train in sight of a government post. The Eastern mail coach came along a short time after these murders were committed and found one of the teamsters scalped and left for dead. The mail party put the teamster on the baggage in the front boot of the coach and discovered before they reached Larned that there was life in what they at first believed to be a corpse. He was taken into the hospital, where he remained until he was able to return to his people in Missouri, where he married and raised a family. I met one of his sons a short time ago, who told me his father was the only living scalped man in the United States. His name is McGee, and he has several children living in this city. I have heard him tell how the Indians would put their spears between his toes and stab him to see if he would move, in order to make sure he was dead before they left him. The wagon train that the Indians captured was hauled to Fort Larned and the flour piled in heaps and covered with tarpaulins on the parade ground. The heavy rains wet the top sacks, caused by taking off the wagon covers. The commanding officer called a board of survey, who condemned the flour and it was sold at public auction. A short time after the sale Col. Foster, from the Commissary Department at St. Louis, came to Fort Larned to investigate and find out why the flour was not assorted, keeping all that was good and selling what was damaged. He stopped at the mail station three or four days while he was examining the Commissary Department at Fort Larned and invited me before he left, if I should reach St. Louis during the time he was stationed there, to not forget to call on him at the Southern hotel. That was forty-three years ago. I trust and hope he is still enjoying good health and happiness.

A little Mexican with his squaw and paposes was camped with the band of Apache Indians that had their villages near Fort Larned, his wife being one of that tribe. He came to the mail station every day before the Indians went on the warpath. He told me he was stolen from Chihuahua when he was a baby. His name was Ta Too. He looked like all Indians, only he wore a pair of ill-made canvass pants in place of a breech worn by all blanket Indians. He would scrub, sweep and wash dishes, doing everything neatly that I put him at. When the Indians commenced their depredations at Larned Ta Too was at the mail station and could not reach his family. Fearing the soldiers on his way to the village would take him for one of the Indians and kill him, I told him he could stop with me until he found a Mexican train that would take care of him. He seemed so devoted to his family that he would get up in the night and walk in his sleep, raving about his squaw and paposes. The heavy rains and melted snow off the mountains caused Pawnee creek to overflow its banks at the point where the mail station was located. Ta Too told me if he could get across the creek he would find his family. I got a washtub and put what bread and meat in it he thought would keep him until he found his family. I tied a line to each handle; he took off his spare garments, putting them in the tub with his rations, and jumped into the creek, swimming to dry land safely. I rolled the line into a ball and threw it across the creek. He caught it and pulled over the tub with all it contained. Placing the line in the tub, I hauled it back and he waved his hand "Bye, bye!" I thought I was through with Ta Too, but I was mistaken. Five or six days after he left I noticed unusual commotion about the fort, horsemen riding out

to meet what they believed to be an Indian. It was Ta Too returning without finding his family. He told the soldiers by signs and Spanish that he was coming to see me. The commanding officer came to inquire of me about the supposed Indian. I told the gentleman I would like he would take charge of him. He had him brought to the post, where they put him to chopping wood. On my way to the settlers' store I had to pass where he was at work and he told he me was sick and not able to work. I informed Dr. Clark, the post physician, who ordered him to the hospital, where he was only a few days when a Mexican freighter was admitted to have one of his limbs amputated and he was put to wait on him. When the freighter was able to travel he took him along with him in his ambulance. Before he left he came to bid me "bye," forty-three years ago.

Sitting one evening in front of the mail station, a poor'y c'ad and barefooted man came along. I invited him to take a seat and asked him where he came from. He replied, "Denver." "How long were you in Denver?" "While I was getting a drink of water; I got in one end of town and out the other." "Where are you going?" "Mister, please ask me no more questions." I apologized for being so inquisitive and kept a close eye on the stranger. After a pause of fifteen or twenty minutes, I asked him if he would like to have something to eat. He said he would and that he was very hungry. My wife prepared some food for him and I brought him into the dining room and remained with him until he finished his meal. A lady from the post was visiting my wife and told me if she knew what size shoe would fit him she would send me a pair to give him. I told her the size and she sent the shoes. I gave them to him and he examined them as carefully as if he was buying them from a shoemaker and returned them to me, saying that he would not wear shoes with a double sole. These were new shoes, the same as those worn by the soldiers. I sent them back to the lady with his objections. Indians were not friendly in those days. I told him I would send him on the stage to the settlements fifteen miles north. One stage goes the Smoky Hill route to Leavenworth and the other keeps the regular mail route to Kansas City, and I told him he could ride whichever way he wanted to go. He said he did not know which way he would take until he came to the junction and preferred walking. This poor, coatless, barefooted creature had traveled from Denver to this point, a distance of 450 miles, carrying an empty sardine box between his two old shirts for use as a water cup, and through an unsettled territory. His only chance for food was the freighters or emigrants that he would meet, and it might be several days before he would get anything to eat.

Setank and Dehosin were the leading chiefs of the Kiowa Indians when I first began to run with the Santa Fe mail. The former was said to be vicious and always inclined to the warpath. Dehosin was said to be the opposite and always advised his people against going to war with the government. After that Santanta became a power in his tribe and had a bad reputation. Kicking Bird was said to be a good Indian by white men that knew him and would some day become influential with his people and the government. I knew both of them personally. Indian annuities in those days were carried by freighters with mule or ox wagon trains, the only transportation obtainable. When they were not arriving quick enough to suit some of the young desper-

does they would talk saucy. When told if they made any trouble the government would chastise them, they would reply that the government had all it could attend to to frighten its own people, referring to the Civil War at that time. I was station agent at Pawnee Fork, Kansas, for six years for contractors who had the carrying of the United States mails from mKansas City, Missouri, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, regulating my hours of labor by the sound of the bugle at Fort Larned from reveille to taps. Buffalo were so numerous in the summers of '62 and '63 that the commanding officer would have soldiers with blank cartridges detailed to drive them off the reservation in order to preserve the grass for the stock belonging to the post. When I was conductor running with the mail I saw three coyotes attack a lone buffalo on the Arkansas, opposite old Fort Mann. One kept jumping at his head as if trying to catch his nose and two kept jumping at his hamstrings until they severed them. Then he became powerless, falling down, and they pounced upon his body and began to devour him. Black Kettle, chief of the Cheyennes, Mimick, War Bonnet, Stand in the Water and many others of the Cheyenne tribe were regular visitors at the mail station. Little Wolf, Little Raven, chief of the Arapahoes; Boka, Granda. Navy. Knock Knee, Left Hand—the latter three could talk English. I knew all of those Indians personally. They believed they had a right to some consideration on account of the mail wagon running through their territory and they came many a night to stop at the mail station, expecting the same courtesy as a guest at a hotel. In the early part of President Lincoln's first administration General Sherman was treating with the Indians at Fort Larned, between the post and the mail station. The leaders of the different bands and their squaws would assemble and sit on the ground in a circle three deep, facing the commissioner. Squaws in the rear, subs next, leading chiefs in front. The speaker would stand up, fasten his buffalo robe around his body, leaving his arms free, addressing the general through his interpreter, John Smith, and telling him his people wanted their goods given to them on the prairie, then they could see if everything was taken out of the wagons. When their annuities were put in the store rooms the doors were locked and they could not tell if they got all the goods the "Good Father" sent them. Their agency was then located at Fort Lyon, Colorado.

In the summer of 1868 an ox train belonging to Pool & Owens was attacked by Kiowa and Cheyenne Indians a short distance from Fort Lyon on the Arkansas river. A Mr. Blynn with his wife and baby was traveling as passengers with the train en route for Lawrence or Topeka, Kansas. Indians made a dash, cutting the train in two, taking the part that Mrs. Blynn and her baby were in; her husband being in the part held by the owners of the train. The poor man was said to be almost crazy about the fate of his wife and baby getting into the hands of those blood-thirsty demons and he did everything in his power to obtain troops to rescue them, but he could not get the desired force and they remained in the hands of the Indians until they were murdered by those savages when they were attacked by the troops of General Sheridan in his winter campaign of 1868. The baby was brained against a tree and the mother shot through the forehead, the weapon which no doubt brought welcome release from their brutal and savage treatment. One of the soldiers who went through all the winter campaign with General Sheridan's command told me that he killed the Indian that shot Mrs.





GENERAL SHERMAN TREATING WITH THE INDIANS

Blynn. Michael and Lawrence Smith, brothers, of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, employees of the Santa Fe Mail Co., were murdered by Kiowa Indians on the Santa Fe Trail, in October, 1859, at Jones' Point, two and a half miles southeast of where Fort Larned was located, and are buried at the former point. Patrick H. Cahill, Washington, D. C., one of the Santa Fe mail drivers, was murdered by Indians ten miles east of the upper Cimarone Springs, October 15, 1859, while traveling with General Fonteroy's command en route for Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is buried near the former point.

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In 1868 I entered into contract with Messrs. Barlow & Sanderson, overland mail contractors, to cut, cure, bale and deliver 800 tons of hay at three of their mail stations fifty miles apart in the then territory of Colorado. I was at great expense buying hay presses, rope for bailing the hay, mowing machines, rakes, and all other utensils necessary to comply with my obligations. Paying freight from St. Louis on the machinery and railroad fares for the men I brought from Kansas City to carry out my agreement. Carrying men and machinery by wagons from the terminus of the railroad to the hay field, 150 miles. Reaching Fort Lyon, I informed General Penrose, the commanding officer, telling him I did not wish to intrude on the government reservation. He referred me to Wajor Quirk, quartermaster, who designated the point where I could commence work, twelve miles east of the post. September 12th Little Raven's band of Arapahces made a raid on my camp, running off forty-five head of large work mules, the only means I had to deliver 560 tons of hay which was ready for transportation, to complete my contract, which was 240 tons short of completion. The loss of the mules caused a delay of two and one half months before I could find transportation, incurring a direct and unavoidable expense of \$3,900 in wages and maintenance of the men, which was a total loss, having no work for them to do on account of the loss of the mules. I had to take care of them until I could find transportation to send them to their homes and families, as I agreed when I employed them. The only transportation I could procure in the sparsely settled country, a long distance from railroads, to deliver the hay, was an ox train at a cost of \$3,000, caused by the loss of the mules. The hay was weighed as it was delivered and showed how much the contract was short. After General Sheridan's campaign against the combined Indian forces—Kio-was, Cheyennes and Arapahoes—they were put on a reservation. September, 1869, I went to Camp Supply, Indian Territory, and informed Mr. Darlington, the Indian Agent, of the depredation. He sent to the reservation after the Indians for the purpose of finding out what band committed the deed. They came to his office and he had his chief clerk take down their statements through the interpreter. The Indians who stole and run off the mules acknowledged that they committed the depredation, and that they were all good mules and that they sold them to buy provisions to subsist on. Mr. Darlington brought me, his clerk, interpreter and the Indians before the adjutant of the post and had all the facts testified to. The mules were appraised by well known citizens who saw them and who testified that they could not be replaced at where they were stolen for less than \$250 per head, or a total of \$11,250. After carefully enumerating my actual losses, I made out my account: Mules, \$11,250;

wagon train for delivering the hay, \$3,000; wages and maintenance of the men, \$3,900; total, \$18,150. I gave the account to Mr. Charles Ewing, Washington, D. C., for collection, instructing him not to accept less than the full amount of my account; that I was damaged \$5,000 over the amount of my account for loss of time and the breaking up of my business. The Honorable Secretary of the Interior allowed \$9,000 on July 21st, 1870, in care of Mr. Charles Ewing, for mules and expenses. That is the entry on the books at the Indian Bureau. Mr. Ewing gave me a treasury warrant for \$6,000, retaining \$3,000 for his services, assuring me that it was only partial payment; that he gave no receipt for the amount he received and saying that Congress did not appropriate a sufficient amount to pay this class of claims in full and he had to take his proportion. When I applied to the Indian office to know the status of my claim, I was informed that Mr. Ewing gave no receipt for any amount, but the inference was the \$9,000 awarded by the Honorable Secretary of the Interior was in full for the claims. I did not charge the Indians with attorney's fees or prospective earnings. I charged only the appraised value of the property and the actual money expended, caused directly by the loss of the mules. The acknowledgement of the Indians with my account is on file at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and will show that the Indians lived on the proceeds of the sale of my property almost two years, while I was deterred from business on account of the loss of the mules. The case was presented to the Court of Claims June 25th, 1891. Copies of the opinion of the Honorable Judge, delivered December 7th, 1896, can be obtained in the file of the Court of Claims. My friends who were familiar with the case advised me to send a history of the claims to the Hon. F. M. Cockerel, then Senator. I did not know the Senator, but I sent him a history of the case, with affidavits of well known gentlemen—Hon. Robt. T. VanHorn, Hon. John W. Henry, Hon. Jules Edgar Guinotte—vouching to my reputation for truth and veracity. He introduced a bill for my relief for \$5,250 December 7th, 1899, reducing the original balance \$3,900, and advising me to send him a few affidavits of persons who saw the mules. I sent him affidavits of well known gentlemen who saw them and knew their value. Hon. John W. Moore, Hon. Wm. R. Benard, Mr. Paterson Stewart, Mr. Emerson Hays, sustained the judgment of the appraiser, making eight affidavits, including four on file at the Indian office, establishing the value of the property, but the case remains in the hands of the committee Mr. Cockerel had it referred to. The guardians of the nation has thrown a shield around its Indian wards effective to prevent his being subjected to any process similar to those existing against the whites, enacting laws making the white man pay twice the just value of the property taken or destroyed by him belonging to Indians, and if such offender shall be unable to pay a sum at least equal to said just value whatever such payment shall fall short of the said just value shall be paid out of the treasury of the United States (1 Statutes at Large, page 470, Sec. 4). The provisions granting indemnity to Indians for losses occasioned by white persons has never been repealed. It is still an existing enactment and is contained in Secs. 2154 and 2155, United States Revised Statutes. My account of \$18,150 is filed at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with the statement of the Indians who committed the depredation, and its number, 748, giving the Indians credit for the \$9,000 allowed by the Honorable Secretary of the Interior. There is still a

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balance due me of \$9,150. My expense was \$900 more than I received from the award allowed by the Honorable Secretary. The \$3,000 which Mr. Ewing claimed as his fee will show the gentlemen who examine the evidence in the case that my expenditures were \$3,900 over the balance of my account and as yet I have received no compensation for my property. A former member of the House of Representatives, some years ago, introduced a bill for my relief, to let me see the interest he had taken in my claims. After the adjournment of Congress he would tell me I had a just claim but Congress would not allow it, as it was already settled by the Court of Claims.

I informed my Representative friend of a case I saw in one of the daily papers, where the government was sued in the Court of Claims by a shipbuilding company of Philadelphia and the court decided in favor of the government. The claimants appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court and that honorable tribunal sustained the judgment of the Court of Claims; then the claimants appealed to Congress, and that honorable body, seeing the justice of the claim, allowed it. Hon. William Warner, United Senator Senator, is a resident of Kansas City 42 years. I knew him almost the entire period and I have confidence in his honesty, ability and statesmanship to have my claim taken up and acted on; then the honorable gentlemen who examine the case will see the long standing injury that has been inflicted on me by the wards of the nation and recommend to allow whatever is justly due.







